41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mr. William Saunders

THEY DON'T WANT TO GET OUT ON A LIMB

829
177

I believe, in my honest opinion, that there's a whole lot of white people on this island that's not bad at all. And I think they would like to see everybody happy, but they don't want to get out on a limb from their own people, be called "nigger-lovers" or any other stories that the people can dream up for them.

I knew a white guy and we sat around and was drinking beer and talking and he was saying that he was with the Negroes in most of the things that they wanted and he believed that most of the things they wanted was right. He said he has never done nothing to hurt the Negroes. I told him that I felt like he hadn't done anything to help the Negroes either because he just sat back and was sort of looking out for his personal self, instead of saying to his friends, when they have gatherings and the question comes up, "I don't believe that we are right in what we are doing. I believe that everybody should have a chance."

829
177
• 357

I think seriously that we got a whole lot of Negroes that are hurting us more than the whites, by acting content--like the maids in the house. Any time the madam would say something to them, they would smile even though within themselves they were unhappy. But this is what was expected of them and so this is what they're doing. They have been conditioned to this. They are not frank and not honest with themselves or the people they deal with. I believe this is one of the things that's hurting us because then the white man feel that he could always push you back, because you're just that way; you're not going to stand up to nothing.

Mr. William Saunders

ALL WOULD BE GETTING EQUAL EDUCATION

829
177

As far as Johns Island is concerned, we got a long way to go. I believe sincerely that there will have to be something that happens real bad to change the situation here. We've coexisted all these years. We have accepted this, and the white man have accepted it. Very seldom do we have to come together on any major thing. So in this respect we could make it if we could keep on going like that, but we can't. Because we have gotten to the place now that my kids are not wanting what I wanted, or *thought* I wanted.

(871)

Nobody has applied yet to go to the white high school. But I think

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

ilton Couper's Hopeton plantation in 1841, was agreeably surprised to see the rank held there by the black mechanics. "When these mechanics come to consult Mr. Couper on business," he wrote, "their manner of speaking to him is quite as independent as that of English artisans to their employers."[18]

Besides the tradesmen, Edward L. Pierce, in 1862 found on the St. Helena Island plantations among the group of laborers "more intelligent than the average," plowmen, watchmen, and religious leaders. Each plantation also had its stock minder who attended to the breeding and care of the stock; and on the better managed plantations, its poultry minder as well. The stock minder frequently served also as coachman for the overseer's family, while the coachman for the planter's family was usually one of the house servants.

Negroes unable to do a full day's work, "quarter hands," "half hands," and "three-quarter hands," usually performed the house work. For instance, the usual house servants on Henry A. Middleton's Weehaw plantation near Georgetown were "a cook that is not a full task[,] a girl of twelve, a boy of fourteen."[19] An old woman did the gardening for the overseer's family, and an old man attended to the overseer's and the owner's horses and served as coachman for the overseer. The house servants attached to the planter's family went back and forth with the family from the plantation to the summer house.

[18] Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States*, I, 267.

[19] Henry A. Middleton, Jr., Weehaw Plantation Book. In possession of Langdon Cheves, Charleston, S. C.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

THE TASK SYSTEM

464 567 Less than half of a planter's total number of laborers could usually be counted upon for a full day's work.

When Captain Basil Hall visited the United States in 1827 and 1828 he found on a sea-island plantation on St. Simon's Island, Georgia, 122 slaves. Of these, seventy were men and women between the ages of fourteen and fifty; forty-eight were children under the age of fourteen; and four were superannuated. The seventy workers were classified as follows: thirty-nine full hands, sixteen three-quarter hands, eleven half hands, and four quarter hands. Out of seventy persons, therefore, the planter had fifty-seven and a half "taskable hands," but those working in the fields were only forty-four taskables, while the other thirteen and a half were employed as cart drivers, nurses, cooks for the Negroes, carpenters, house servants, and stock minders.[20] (463) (359)

The number of taskable hands on a plantation varied from year to year. Children were not sent to the field until they were fourteen, but were put to work at minor jobs, pulling weeds, "minding child," picking up trash, washing dishes. Superannuated slaves were also given tasks calling for little physical exertion; such as, gardening, tending horses, nursing, sewing. *Enceinte* women did half tasks until confinement, and women with suckling babies also did half task until the child was eight months old. A slave who had been sick did a portion of a task until he had sufficiently recovered to resume his accustomed amount of work.

[20] Captain Basil Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828*, II, 229.